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THE FAMILY INSTITUTION—ITS SACREDNESS AND SIGNIFICANCE.

“At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.”—JEREMIAH xxxi. 1.

YEARS, and even ages, were to intervene between the utterance of this promise by the lips of the prophet and its actual fulfillment in the times of the restoration of the Jews from their captivity. Meanwhile they were to pass through great and violent changes and commotions which threatened their existence as a people. Yet, upon their return, the arrangement of the nation into families would be found entirely unaffected. And this thought, suggested by the text, is exceedingly note-worthy, and is found, too, universal in its bearings—that, however society may be rent by sudden and long-extended revolutions, seeming to reach to its very foundations, and producing chaos which only the hand of God can reduce to order, the family institution remains permanent, the immovable basis upon which all others are built. In our own times we have an illustration the most remarkable in man's history, where in the French nation over the Church swept destroying storms, and all civil government lay prostrate, but against all the attempts of evil men, “the family”

remained as a munition of rocks, upon which the government and the church are reared again, essentially unchanged. In this promise, too, God not only recognizes the permanence and importance of the family, but presents Himself under an aspect peculiarly attractive. He had from the first been the *national* God of the Jews, enthroned in clouds and darkness, shining forth to the worshipers from between the cherubim, and displaying His wrath against His enemies. But they have been afflicted, and return stricken and feeble to their land, and now he is the *household* God, coming as an inhabitant under the lowly roof, and throwing the light of His glory around all that circle with whom He has condescended to associate. For we cannot believe the promise has reference only to the families of Israel collectively, or to those families in the large sense, that is, the *clans*, somewhat smaller than the tribes; the preceding clause would teach otherwise, for, "Behold, saith the Lord, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tent, and have mercy on his dwelling-places, and out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry. I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small." Neither need we scruple to interpret this word in its fullest significance, as we remember that he who brought down to man the thoughts of the heart of God, and who sanctified human dwelling-places by His presence, said, "If any man will keep my word, my Father will love him, and we will come and take up our abode with him." This great promise belongs to the church, and to the church of all times, for God does not recede in His purposes of grace, and God is now an inhabitant of the Christian house, claiming to regulate its affairs, guarding its interests, providing daily bread for its members, comforting in sorrow, and when death dissolves the consecrated community gathering it again in fairer realms.

This is the true ideal of the human family—that God is in it, the Sovereign, the Guardian, the Friend, the common bond of union; that it confesses His presence and recognizes His claims; that to Him each day the hearts of all go up in thankfulness, and the *thank-offering* also be rendered. This is the promise, which shall be fulfilled in the approaching era of gladness and long-expected reign of Christ, when, in the countless habitations of cities and villages, altars of thank-offering shall be reared as in temples to God, and all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Believing that false estimates of this institution must be productive of lasting and fatal injury, and that such estimates most widely prevail, we shall ask your prayerful attention to some considerations which may serve to correct them. And to the end that each member of the family may discern his personal obligations in guarding and promoting household religion, we shall speak, in the first place, of the sacredness of the institution, and secondly, of its design under the divine government.

I. The sacredness of the family as a *divine institution*. It is the oldest of all earthly institutions, older than the church or the state, or even than the Sabbath, which "was made for man," and not man for it. The materials of creation finished, there in the formation of the first family in Eden, history, properly speaking, began. Imposing and significant was that first marriage ceremony, in which Adam must for a time return to unconsciousness, to the image of death from which he is raised to a new life, to new and strange relations, which, by a striking sign—even by a miracle wrought—are ordained to be permanent. The soul of the first man understood the meaning of God, when he said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." It was the confession for all times, that separation would be as unnatural as it would be profane. And it also, you will recollect, allowed no cruelty, no misfortune, no external disgrace, not even insanity, to be a sufficient ground in the sight of God for divorce, signifying that it were better great calamities and wrongs should be suffered in single instances than that mankind should come to regard lightly the bonds of a divinely appointed institution. If we enter then the human household, and look upon it even in the light of nature, it is seen to be a kingdom ordained of God, with its own laws, interests, and responsibilities; in the earliest times, its patriarch, the eldest born, being its ruler and priest, to whom disobedience was a crime. But, in the light of revelation, is it seen a kingdom of such importance in the divine economy, that the King of heaven comes down to issue regulations for its administration. He leaves the state mainly to make its own laws, but He takes every member of the family under His own supervision, from the master of the house to the servant, and even the dumb animal that serves; the husband, the wife, the children, the man-servant, and maid-servant, and the cattle, whose treatment is also seen to have a mighty influence on the moral character of the whole household. In relation to all these, God as Governor of the world issues special edicts, and not only general principles of action but the minutest directions. And it was because He, who does nothing in vain, knew what the family was, and its indestructible influence for weal or woe upon every other relation of life, and would impress upon us that this institution was not an institution of man. Probably most of us could be astonished at the vast collection of laws for the family which would be made from the word of God, which is a statute for the household. And continually, as Christianity extends its influence, does the family become more sacred, and a grandeur is seen to invest it to which we are blind, only because sin has blinded us to all the real grandeur of life, and contracted our views to what is only paltry and sensual. Christianity will yet bring forth this holy institution, so long neglected, degraded, perverted, and debased, to its true position. Already the light is glimmering upon

some minds, and already is it seen, that with increase of knowledge and with moral elevation, the members of the household are bound in closer bonds, and that each member falling into his proper position is necessary to complete a symmetry of God's own devising. To every believer the family of the Christian ought to be sacred, because God has declared its members holy, and has ordered the sacred seal of baptism to be set upon them, even upon the infant, including all in one covenant of grace, and allowing the parent to exercise faith, and to plead promises for the child. And no Christian ought to forget that Jesus Christ was a member of the human family, and that His infant smile once answered to a mother's, as nature was weaving around Him the mysterious household ties, and that he knew filial reverence and brotherly affection. Neither when His soul expanded with the mighty thoughts of his mission, nor when the God-head shone out with power, nor when the earth was reeling under the great expiation for sin were those ties lessened. Looking down from the cross He sees His mother weeping, and near her the beloved disciple, and the affection of a son still speaks from amid the agonies of death, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to his disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and thus in the life of Jesus, which is the example for all generations, do we find proof that the family should be perpetual, and thus also forever in the eyes of the believer is the family consecrated.

There are also mysterious and unexplained bonds which unite the human family, and the oldest tragedies in the world are founded upon the dark woes of a household, scattered and suffering for the crime of one of its members. Everywhere the avenging power is upon their track. Ignorant of one another, even of their relationship, and flying from refuge to refuge, a relentless fate shuts them up to a common and terrible destiny. Even the darkened heathen mind in distant ages could see that families are bound by ties stronger than interest or affection, and with shuddering could see how a crime sent mysteriously its fatal influence through them all like the stroke of an axe through all the leaves and branches of the same tree, or, as a desecration polluted the whole temple, which from thenceforth was devoted to destruction. There was none to tell him the great lesson made known to us why death so relentlessly pursues us all, because we are the family of man. "By one *man* sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all *men* for that all have sinned;" neither for him was there any sanctuary from the destroying and invisible power.

The blindest can see that physical, intellectual and moral qualities come down in the family; the family resemblance reaching to the very soul, and the results of evil actions and of good ones descending to the third and fourth generations. God visits the iniquities of the fathers on the children, and when

Dathan and Abiram sinned, their wives and children, standing with them in the doors of their tents, are seen to descend alive with their fathers into the abyss. But we also behold Noah entering with his house into the ark: we can see that God meant the strange family bond for good.

These bonds of the family are more than imaginary; they are grounds of imputation. They belong to us as "fearfully and wonderfully made;" and as death visits the household, and a parent, a brother, a sister, or a child falls and is borne to the tomb, the souls of them that remain mourn in the depths of their nature as if a part of their very life were taken away. Human institutions, however carefully erected, though consecrated by oaths solemnly taken, and imposing ceremonies, yet reach no farther than interest or, at best, sentiment; but God's institutions reach to the very life of man, and take hold of his spiritual nature.

Thus has God set off every family from all other families, and given to it in all lands a seclusion, and a seclusion the more sacred as His word obtains a power the more sacred over the heart. The important reasons of this seclusion we shall see as we come to the second part of our discourse; but there is another thought connected with the sacredness of the institution which we cannot pass by. It is, that God has made the human family the *symbol of heaven* and of heavenly things. And so generally is this the case, that, were infidelity to succeed in its miserable attempt to break up the household, a vast portion of the word of God would become unintelligible, and all the best portions of our knowledge and highest conceptions of spiritual things would disappear. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," nature itself has our modern reformers in derision, as they attempt to stir, and upheave, and re-arrange the pillars of this mighty government of God, in which it is the wisdom and the blessedness of ignorant man to take refuge as a bird in its mountain. How without the family could we comprehend God as a Father? The Parable of the Prodigal Son would be forever lost to us, and the Spirit of Adoption and our Father's House would become to us sounds of unknown significance. The life of Jesus would be as worthless to us as a myth to be swept into the rubbish of the past, for we could no longer comprehend the beauty of its pervading spirit of love, nor imitate His acts of fraternal and child-like affection. It is by the family that we understand the relations of the church to Christ as the Bride of the Lamb, and the Church as the mother of us all, by whom we are nourished and nurtured for a higher life, or the relations the redeemed are to sustain unto each other as they dwell in the "many mansions" and eat bread with the Elder Brother. But what a sanctity does the employment of the family images for such a purpose throw around this institution on which we are prone to look so slight-

ingly. Taken for the service of the temple, "Holiness to the Lord" is written upon it. Having its origin in the dawns of time, it has through all ages been a shadow of spiritual and heavenly realities—a reflection in these turbid waters of the light of our distant home. Ah! Christian parent, it was not when the stranger died that you looked from the symbol to the reality. It was when your child left you, you saw the mute beckonings of the young spirit as it was ascending to a Father's bosom, and to dwell with its kindred; then only you found consolation in the thought that this is the shadow that passeth away, but the substance abideth forever.

From what we have said it is evident that the family can be no otherwise than an institution of vast influence and power in the world. However simple its organization or limited its resources, there are in it so much of the wisdom and authority of God, that we can only cease to regard it with awe when we have lost all reverence for Him, or respect for His purposes, or fear of His judgments.

II. But we must now proceed to inquire, "What is the *design* of the Family institution in the divine economy?"

Temporal though it be in its nature, yet the briefest observation will show us its most intimate connection with the eternal, its solemn bearing upon all that goes to make up our life in this world and the next—the divinely appointed habitation in which the young and ignorant spirit finds a temporal home. Unconscious as yet of its origin or destiny, of its capacities, of duty, of danger, coming an entire stranger into the universe it is never again to leave; it here derives its first impressions (which give a coloring to all others). It finds its ideas of what life is, or what is its end, where it meets the true or pretended guides which lead it onward or send it forth with instructions upon its endless journey. *The family is the nursery of all those affections*, the regulation and exercise of which is in all after-life to constitute the happiness or wretchedness of their possessor. Here it is, if ever, the basis is to be laid in parental authority for reverence and the spirit of submission; in parental truth for faith; in parental affection for filial love. We may best conceive how much we owe to the family in the development of the social affections by bringing before us a complete household, modelled and conducted according to the divine command. The father, remembering that he is the representative of God and therefore careful to mingle his commands with affection, to see that they are founded in perfect righteousness and that therefore they are always obeyed. The mother, ever conscious that God has made her the representative of the church, and taking for her guidance the law of her God. And both looking up to Him who "giveth wisdom," and consecrating their children to holi-

ness, would be sure of the return of reverential, affectionate, and trustful hearts. If affliction come, all their sons and daughters would rise up to comfort them; if disease—if poverty—enter as an "armed man," filial love would protect them as the shield of the mighty. When old age comes on, no neglect from ungrateful children would dishonor their "crown of glory," as leaning on the strong arm of manhood they would go down to rest in the grave. The moral effect of such a life no mind can estimate, or the value of such an education just when it is possible in the life of the soul, when it is to be decided what affections shall predominate, when the foundations are laid to which the building must conform. In such a family rise up the brotherly affections and their accompaniments, self-denial and mutual assistance, compassion for the sick, tenderness for the weak, sense of mutual rights, obedience to law among equals and for inferiors. In a word, all those characteristics which fit man for life in the world are here developed, and for this end the family is instituted. Qualities, which in individual men have awed or charmed the world, are traceable back to the family; and the greatest men the world has known, have confessed that to a father's or a mother's teaching they owed the impulse which sent them onward. The man's life as a citizen of this world will be mainly shaped by the influences of home. The orderly citizen most generally has come from the orderly home; the law-breaker from the lawless household. Go into the state prison and you will find it so; and hundreds, with one voice, will tell you in effect, "I was never in my home inspired with one high or true conception of life. My father never seemed to think of my futurity, or to know any responsibility. My mother lived for show and dress and vanity, and never imparted to me one lofty guiding thought. Without an idea of government I was sent into the world, and only by the stern, harsh, soulless edicts and penalties of the civil State am I educated for time and eternity. I had no home, or my home was like a hell." Thus does every family send out its representatives into the world to tell its secrets. But a truth of far greater importance is that in the design of God the *Family is the nursery of the Church*. Whether in the case of Abraham, the Family and the Church being one, God designed to lay down a great principle we need not now inquire; but that He afterwards taught the intimate connection of the two institutions is sufficiently evident, for He not only ordained the rite of circumcision and baptism to the household, but He solemnly enjoined upon His people to teach to their households, and especially to their children, the great truths held by the church, and to impress upon their minds its principles. "Thou shalt teach these things diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Train up

your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Christian family is holy. It is itself a miniature church, to which promises are made, yea, with which God enters into covenant, where praises are rendered, and the brotherly love, which afterward finds a field for exercise in the church at large, originates and is cultured. All the qualities which go to make one a useful or a useless member of the House of God, are developed in the family. On the one hand, benevolence, sympathy for suffering, gentleness, love for God's works of Nature, enlarged views of the world; or, on the other, covetousness, fear of poverty, ignorance of the wants of a great suffering world. It is of vast importance that Christian parents should understand that they are appointed by God to bring up, to educate their children as members of the Church of Christ; that in their own hearts they are to keep that thought uppermost in all their discipline, remembering that in this great work they have the promised aid of God. And until they act upon this thought, they have done nothing of real value for their child. And the question often recurring to every Christian parent should be, not what is this child to be, as a member of society, but what is he to be in the church of Jesus Christ. Am I shaping his views in accordance with a calling so high and glorious, in accordance with the movings of Providence, and the signs of the times? We do not mean to assert that the parent can *convert* the child, but that he should train him up in the *expectation* of his conversion; should seek to develop those traits of character which make the useful *Christian*; should chisel the marble into shape, although he cannot give life. Let him act in faith, and the law of the kingdom is that life shall come.

But there is another truth to which we have already alluded, but which rises transcendent in magnitude, and in whose shadows we may well sit trembling—the *family is the nursery for eternity*. There is indeed one redeeming power beyond it, and that is the Church, and blessed be God! it has reclaimed thousands who have gone forth from Godless homes. But what are these to the millions who, under the power of a mighty and perverted law, are hurried from the habitations of men to the habitations of the lost. You are educating forever, ye parents, those immortal spirits whose emotions are seen in smiles or tears. They are *spirits*, oh! my hearer, that look forth upon you from their earthly house—that have mysteriously come to your dwelling as a home—that have entwined themselves around your hearts—that cling to you to guide them into rest. If you are wise, you will make no impress there without prayer for heavenly wisdom. We look forward into the eternal world, and behold a human spirit, who for ages has stood before the throne of God; and yet, amid the glory that envelopes him, we see the likeness he bore on earth. The powers that have become vast, are those which began to

move in the human family; reverence, trust, *all* found nutriment there; and the poor teachings of the earthly home are deathless, because they were imparted to a living soul. Neither will the fires of hell eradicate the impress of the family influence; but still the lost soul will carry the family likeness; will trace back its emotions, its spirit of disobedience, its irreverence to that home of earth, where the prayerless parent baptized it for despair, and taught it to forsake the house of God, to live without prayer, to love gold, and to seek for rest in the honors of the fading world.

We can clearly see from this why God has secluded families and divided the earth into households. It is that we may definitely look upon the Family by itself as His institution, and that by countless instances He may show its power for good and for evil, and by terrible or encouraging examples and results of good or evil training. All over the earth and for thousands of years sending His mercy to the families that kept His commands, He has taught mankind, pouring out His fury on the families that called not on His name. Another reason equally important is seen for this separation of households, that each may for itself uncontrolled by others decide on obedience or disobedience. Thus God sets forth families, that wickedness may not be perpetual, that the curse may be cut off as the new household is formed after righteousness, but that continually the sources of influence may be new. That instinctive fear the Christian parent feels, lest the child should be contaminated with the world, is implanted by God, and accords with the divine design. It is that his family may be kept holy and become a centre of holy influence, that each like Abraham may with his household be separate from the godless and worldly, except to do them good; that here the voice of instruction may be heard; and here, and not among strangers, the training of the child for time and eternity may go on.

In this discourse, my friends, I have felt, and I think you have, that we have been wandering in an ideal world; and as we look at the real conduct of most human families we are ready to ask, were not the instructions of the Bible upon the Family given for some other race? Alas! how has sin defaced all the beautiful things of God, and strewn the earth with broken fragments of the house of divine symmetry and proportion! Here and there the fair household virtues shine forth in this night of sin but separate, save as the Gospel has united them from the heavenly. My brethren, if we saw the Family in the light of revelation, we should look with the same horror upon the prayerless house, as we now do on a desecrated temple of God. Upon it we should see resting the frown of an incensed Deity, and awaiting it and all its unhappy inmates a doom over which human tragedy may not presume to utter its wail. The prayerless house is a doomed

temple. It must fall in pieces, and fire will waste it, and desolating winds scatter its dust.

In the light of the truths we have considered, we see whence come the wide-spread and desolating evils under which the nations, and our own with others, is called to mourn, and where is to be applied the heaven-appointed remedy. The godly citizen must come from the godly household; and as well might we hope to build a goodly vessel from the rough unhewn timber of the forest, as an orderly, righteous nation from the families in which disorder reigns, that fear not God, and disregard His commandments. Vain are all civil laws—vain as for the farmer to sow his seed after the seed-time has gone by—vain all civil penalties—vain as the pruning axe to change the nature of the tree. For God's institutions there can be no substitute; for the disregard of them no remedy. For six thousands years the world has striven to prosper without them; but there has been no peace—there shall be none to the wicked. Kingdom after kingdom has striven to allay human disorders, and then gone down into darkness; codes of laws, in every line of which justice appeared, have appealed to the moral sense; but still the man slayer in all lands has shed the blood of his victim; and the thief has stealthily crept through the darkness, and the prisons have been crowded with the shameless and the hardened. *There can be no peace* until God becomes the *household* Deity, and His name and truth enter into the earliest associations of the soul. Thank God, my hearer, if you awoke into life in such a home, where, from lips now perhaps silent in death, you heard, even as the light of life was dawning around you, messages from your infinite Father—a home in which the word of God was the central light and glory, where the morning and evening prayer was uttered; and voices sang the praises to be perfected in heaven. Happy the man who, from the vexations, turmoils and disappointments of this life, can look back upon such a home, and especially to that which such a home foreshadows. The great Napoleon, upon his desolate isle, stood firm as the rock under his feet against the storms that beat upon him, until he spake of his early home and thoughts of his mother came; then the wondrous movements of his history, and the magnificent empire he had gained and lost, and great thoughts that had borne him up, passed away from his memory. The voice that had commanded kings and armies was broken, as with head bowed down he cried, "Oh! for my home, my mother!" Ah! had he not learned that earthly and filial love pointed to a higher? and that earthly home, forever vanished, was designed by God to be a shadow of a heavenly? Is it necessary, my hearers, to add another word to impress upon all present their responsibilities? It is natural to desire power, and God has set you over a kingdom whose interests far outweigh those of any mere external empire on the face of the earth. For the misrule

of kings and the social disorders they have occasioned, He will hold them responsible. For the disorders and godlessness, the lax morality and failure of instruction and false instructions of the family, if such prevail, and the transmission of these to other generations, the King of kings will also summon you to a solemn reckoning. Look upon the household over which he has set you! Are you ready to answer to your Judge, to Him who hath said, "He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." And has your household no claims upon you? You have brought to it a heritage of sin and sorrow. Oh! ere you lie down in the dust, gather a treasure of many prayers and kind instructions, pious examples and hallowed memories, that you may leave to them a heritage when you go "the way you shall never return." May God bless His truth to your souls. Amen.

H Y M N .

Come at the morning hour,
Come, let us kneel and pray;
Prayer is the Christian pilgrim's staff
To walk with God all day.

At noon, beneath the Rock
Of Ages, rest and pray;
Sweet is that shelter from the sun
In the weary heat of day.

At evening, in thy home,
Around its altar, pray;
And finding there the house of God,
With heaven then close the day.

When midnight veils our eyes,
O, it is sweet to say,
I sleep, but my heart waketh, Lord!
With Thee to watch and pray.

—BRIDGES' COLL.

SERMON DCXCII.

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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

"And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."—1 Cor. xv. 17.

THE death of Christ is the great central fact in the history of the world. To this the saints of old, for the space of four thousand years, looked forward, through the dim shadows of rites and offerings. For this Lamb slain in the purpose of God, Prophets, priests and kings waited long, and died without the sight. To him hanging on the cross as a sacrifice for sin, have all believers since that day looked back for comfort and peace. As the Sun is the centre of the universe, so the Cross of Christ is the centre to which the hearts of all men that would attain blessedness must be directed. All the ends of the earth, and all ages of times, must look unto him for salvation. No historical fact since the world began can have the importance of this; or needs more certain proof than this, whether Christ not only died, but rose again. No question can be raised that involves the interests of a greater number of persons, or for a longer time: for, as he is the only Saviour, if he be not raised, our faith in him is ineffectual and we are still in our sins.

I. Christ undoubtedly died on the cross. Matthew simply says, "He yielded up the Ghost." Mark informs us that when Joseph of Arimathea begged the body for interment, Pilate first received information from the centurion on the point before he granted the request. And John testifies that when the soldiers, to hasten the death of the criminals, brake their legs, finding Christ already dead, refrained from that, but one of them thrust his spear into his side, and blood and water flowed out. And after this Joseph preferred his request for the body. There could be no room for collusion or deception;—Pilate, and the centurion, and the Roman soldier, whose trade was blood, and who took so much pains to be assured of the fact, could not be mistaken. Divine Providence secured the proof of this against all cavil, and at the same time fulfilled the prophecy, that "a bone of him should not be broken."—"And he that saw it bare record; and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true." The witness John knew the importance of this fact.

II. The dead body was laid in the tomb of Joseph, "a rich man," "a good man and just," "an honorable counsellor," by himself and Nicodemus, another rich man and counsellor, not open friends of the Saviour. His own disciples had no hand in his pious act of rendering the last honors to the body of the Redeemer. But though he died with the wicked, with the rich was his burial.

III. This was a new tomb, hewn out of solid rock, and in which no other body had been deposited.

This is a matter that requires more prominence than is commonly given to it. There could be no collusion—no substitution of any other body.

John employs two negatives in speaking on this point; literally, "in which no man had never been laid." But Luke asserts still stronger by *three*; one of which denies of the fact, another of the time, and the third of the person—"where had not been laid, at no time, no person"—all of which in Greek strengthen the negatives.

The latter witness seems to have known and felt that much depended on this.

Tombs of this kind remain at this day about Jerusalem cut out of the solid rock.

IV. This tomb was closed up by a door of solid rock, sealed up by authority, and a guard of Roman soldiers detailed to watch it.

These precautions were taken at the instance of the Chief Priests and Pharisees, to prevent any pretence of a Resurrection: "they made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." And of course they knew that the body, about which they had so much concern, was in the tomb. And their words and actions prove that they knew that the whole matter at issue between him and them was now to be decided.

But as Providence directed, these precautions authenticated and established the Resurrection: for on the third day, according to the time before appointed, the body was missing. There was no access to it any other way than by the door, which was closed by a rock, sealed by the governor, and watched by some say sixty soldiers.

But, to the confusion of those who had compassed his death, the body was gone Sabbath morning. All parties testify to this fact. The women who hastened to the tomb very early in the morning. The disciples who also went. The soldiers on guard reported the body missing, and how can its absence be accounted for? There are only four suppositions possible.

1. That the soldiers of the guard removed it. But they are not charged with this gross disregard of duty. They had no

motive for it. They were Romans—placed there by the highest authority in the Province. They saw the seal, and if they broke it they must suffer death; military discipline was very severe. They had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, and they could not be guilty of such an act. They would incur the enmity of the great body of the Jews and of the Roman government.

2. That the Chief Priests and Pharisees caused its withdrawal. But they had caused his death, and in case of any pretence of a Resurrection it was their interest to show the dead body where it was laid. They would not and could not do the very thing that they took so much pains to prevent; and there was no place so safe to keep it as this tomb.

3. That the disciples removed it. But first, they had not courage to encounter a whole company of soldiers. When he was arrested, "they all forsook him and fled."

Secondly. They did not expect his Resurrection, and had no motive to remove the body. When Christ predicted his own death and Resurrection, "they understood not that saying," being still blinded by their views of a temporal kingdom, which continued till the day of his ascension. And on another occasion, when he had spoken of rising from the dead, "they questioned one with another what that could mean."

Thirdly. When the two Marys had been to the tomb, and had seen the angel who told them of the Resurrection, the Apostles did not believe their report. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." And Thomas, who was not present at first, was so incredulous that it required the strongest kind of proof to convince him.

Fourthly. The state in which the grave clothes were found shows that the body was not stolen. They were wrapped up in order, as by one perfectly quiet and without indecent haste.

Fifthly. The body was honorably buried by a friend, in a new tomb, and abundant preparations made—a hundred pounds of myrrh and spices for embalming it—and there was no conceivable motive to remove it except to fulfill prophecy; and "as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead."

4. No other supposition remains but that the body was removed without hands. He, by his own power, burst the gates of the grave, and took up that life that he had laid down. This would be the necessary consequence had no one seen him afterwards—had he immediately, on that Sabbath morning, ascended to Heaven without manifesting himself to men. But the angels that appeared to the women declared that he "*was risen*." Mary Magdalen first saw him. Two other disciples, as they walked and went into the country, saw him next, "*in another form*," with a different dress or a changed countenance. Afterward he appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and "*did eat before them*."

On another occasion, at the Sea of Galilee, "he showed himself unto them." Paul informs us that he was seen by above five hundred brethren at once, which was probably on the mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed to meet them.

And so, after eating and drinking and familiarly conversing with his disciples for forty days, and appearing to none else, he ascended to Heaven in the sight of them all. After his ascension he appeared, first,

To the Martyr Stephen, "standing at the right hand of God." He appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus, "as to one born out of due time," who refers often to this fact as important—"that he had seen the Lord" after his Resurrection. Christ told him that he appeared to him for this purpose—to make him a witness. John had a sublime vision of his person in the first chapter of Revelations. It is believed by many that Pontius Pilate sent an account of the death and Resurrection of Christ to Tiberius, the Emperor; and this is in itself highly probable.

We have the experience of numerous saints who have felt and borne their testimony to the power of his Resurrection; who know that they have not believed a cunningly devised fable. They have trusted in him as a living Saviour, and have not been put to shame. This inward persuasion cometh not from faith in a falsehood, but by belief of the truth. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

And though other persons saw the Saviour repeatedly after his Resurrection, the eleven disciples were the chosen witnesses to testify concerning it to the world through all ages. And as so much is depending on their testimony, we may examine a little into their character. We may say that a competent witness must have *three* qualifications: 1. Capacity. 2. Opportunity. 3. Integrity.

1. Then, the disciples were capable of observing and judging of facts. Though "ignorant and unlearned men" in some things, yet their being men of plain common sense does not militate against their testimony, or disqualify them for witnesses. There was no defect alleged in respect to their bodily senses or mental faculties. And that they were not too credulous, we see in the case of Thomas' unwillingness to believe in the Resurrection of Christ without ocular demonstration, and in their slowness to admit the report of the women, that the Lord had indeed risen from the dead. Though warned beforehand, they do not catch at the tidings as something they were just waiting to hear. They were probably as much amazed to hear of his Resurrection as the Scribes and Pharisees. And when Christ appeared to them, he "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart; because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

2. They had abundant opportunity to witness that about which they were to bear testimony. It was not done in a corner; it was not some ghost—an illusion of the senses—something seen only once, and in the dimness of twilight, or in the darkness of midnight. They had been in familiar intimacy with their Master for three years, constituting his family, witnessing his actions in various circumstances. They were the very ones best qualified to prove his identity, “who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead”—who saw the scars of the nails in his hands and feet, and touched his wounded side; who declare “what they have heard, what they have seen with their eyes,* what they have looked upon, and their hands have handled;” who lay great stress on the fact that they had personal knowledge.

1. By sense of hearing.

2. By sense of sight.

3. By sense of touch.

Just as Christ directed them—“*Behold my hands and my feet that it is I, myself; handle me and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.*” And then to give them full confirmation, took a fish and honey comb and ate before them. “To whom he showed himself alive after his passion, *by many infallible proofs*, being seen of them forty days,” proving to them that he had a real body of flesh and bones, by his eating, drinking, walking and conversing with them; and not the shadow, or appearance of one, as the Docetæ afterwards taught. His body had not undergone its final transformation into its glorified form, as seen by the beloved disciple in the first chapter of Revelation. And when the Apostles supplied the place of Judas, the great qualification to fill the office was that the person was one who had been in their company all the time that the Lord went in and out among them, “unto that same day that he was taken up from them,” and who had had an opportunity to see all that had occurred in that time. The Apostles made this the great-point of their preaching—that God had raised up Christ and exalted him to be a prince and a Saviour; the great object for which Christ had called and trained them, to be his witnesses to all nations.

And if it be objected, as it is by infidels, that he did not show himself openly to all the people—to his foes, as well as to his friends—to those who put him to death, as well as to his disciples—it may be said, first, that he had done enough to satisfy the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees, and it was useless to give them further proof. They, as a nation, had rejected him. They

* The Greek terms are Luke i. 2, *αὐτοματι*; and 2 Peter i. 16, *εὐματι*, eye-witnesser. To see with the eyes is not pleonastic, but “intimates the certainty of the perception.”—*Winer's Idioms*, Sec. 67.

knew of the fact of his Resurrection in various ways: from the report of the guard, and from the declarations of other witnesses, and from the circumstances of the case. He had before given them the sign of Jonas, the Prophet. And if he had appeared openly, they would have sought his death again, just as they did Lazarus: hence, he appointed a public meeting for his disciples in Galilee. And, besides, if he had, how would they all know? It would depend at last on the testimony of the disciples to prove his personal identity; so that he took the wisest course—to qualify twelve men to stand before the world as his witnesses, and to rest the whole burden upon them, with the aid of the Holy Spirit and his promised presence; and if it be said that a delusion was practised on the senses of the whole number, twelve, and all the others who saw him, both the women and the five hundred whom Paul mentions, to some of whom he appeals as still alive twenty years after, then no one can credit his senses, and there is an end of human testimony. But

“He showed himself alive to chosen witnesses,
By proofs so strong that the most slow assenting
Had not a scruple left. This being done,
He mounted up to Heaven.”

Matthias having been in the company of Christ and the Apostles all the time of his public ministry, was specially prepared beforehand for a witness, and was as much an original witness as any of the others. (Acts i. 21, 22.) And it is worthy of remark here that twelve is the number adopted for jurymen throughout the civilized world.

3. They related faithfully what they had witnessed; we can put confidence in their integrity.

1. They gave their testimony there on the spot, and when the transactions were recent, and where they could easily be convicted of falsehood, if guilty of it, and by those strongly interested to do so; why was it not done?

2. Every motive of a temporal nature operated upon them to favor the Jews. Christ forewarned them to expect persecutions in his service. They were poor, destitute of human aid, and friendless; while against them was power, civil, military and ecclesiastical. And yet they adhered to their testimony, in opposition to priests, philosophers and rulers.

3. They attested their sincerity by enduring the greatest sufferings; “starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.” Death, and worse than death. No perils could deter, no danger daunt them. The death and the Resurrection of Christ was their first and their last message in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Philippi, in Corinth, in Athens and Rome.

They might often be on every side oppressed, but not distressed; perplexed, but not dispirited; persecuted, but not

deserted; prostrated, but not destroyed:* for when one was cut down, crucified, burnt at the stake, as in the gardens of Nero, or torn by wild beasts in the amphitheatre, others rose up to fill his place—and persecution proved like the sowing of dragon's teeth, where every one sprung up an armed man; so the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. The more effort was made against it, the more it progressed, till, from being a despised sect, it rose to occupy the seat of its former persecutors.

Now, men may suffer martyrdom in error, in defence of what they suppose true, when it is not; but they cannot do it, in the face of every human motive to the contrary, in defence of what they know to be a lie, a false statement of a fact. They gave the highest proof of their own faith in what they testified; and what would satisfy them, ought to create belief in all the world. They give us the evidence on which they believed, and we may go and do likewise. If all false, why not *one* even turn state's evidence?

4. But that is not all; they had the unequivocal testimony of Him that cannot lie, in their favor to confirm their words; just as much as if he had spoken, as in reference to Christ, by word of mouth from heaven.

Hence they were not to leave Jerusalem to begin their testimony till they were endued with power from on high.

"And then they went forth and preached everywhere, the *Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.*" "*Who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*"

A miracle then is an act of God, above the power of men, but by their hands, to confirm their words; and it is conclusive, for it is impossible to suppose that God would thus add his testimony to what is false, and to give credence to a message that he did not send. But he does become a voucher for the message which they delivered; they call for attestation from him, and he gives it.

5. We have a monument commemorating this great fact, and confirming the testimony of the witnesses, in the Holy Sabbath.

Immediately after the resurrection they set apart the first day of the week, and called it the Lord's Day, for this very reason, that on it he had risen—they made it their day of religious worship.

Ancient writers assert that this day was kept for that purpose. Barnabas says, that in his time "the eighth day was observed with gladness, being that on which Jesus rose from the dead." Many other ancient writers speak of the same thing. If the resurrection be denied, how can the fact of the observance of this day distinct from the Jewish Sabbath be accounted for?

* This is the literal rendering, and in the exact form of the original in 2 Cor. iv. 9.

"The first day of the week was everywhere celebrated for the Christian Sabbath, and which is not to be passed over without observing; as far as appears from Scripture, there is nowhere any dispute about the matter. There was controversy concerning circumcision, and other points of the Jewish religion, whether they were to be retained or not, but nowhere do we read concerning the change of the Sabbath. There were indeed some Jews converted to the Gospel, who as in some other things they retained a smack of their old Judaism, so they did in the observance of days (Rom. xiv. 5; Gal. iv. 10), but yet not rejecting or neglecting the Lord's day. They celebrated it and made no manner of scruple, it appears, concerning it; but they would have their old festival days too; and they disputed not at all, whether the Lord's day were to be celebrated, but whether the Jewish Sabbath ought not to be celebrated also."*

6. We have one argument more bearing on this point, and that is, The coming of Christ in power to destroy Jerusalem, and put an end both to the Church and State. His foretelling this is no ordinary prophecy; His fulfillment of it no ordinary miracle; when he took vengeance on them to the utmost for imbruing their hands in his blood; and then imprecating it upon themselves, and leaving it as a legacy to their children.

It was predicted under a variety of forms of expression: "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in *His Kingdom*;" "till they have seen the *Kingdom of God* come with power;" "till they see the *Kingdom of God*;" "when the Son of Man is revealed."

In the 24th chapter of Matthew, after giving a great variety of signs that are to precede, he says, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven;" and soon after he says, "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled."

The people then of that generation would have full proof that the Son of Man was the Divine Messiah, just as much as if he had appeared in person. And that his words were fulfilled to the very letter, in the terrible calamities that befell that unhappy nation, and that guilty city, we have the accounts of Josephus, a cotemporary and an eye-witness, and not a Christian: who seems to have been raised up and qualified by Providence, for this very purpose, to confirm the words of our Saviour unwittingly. Tacitus and Suetonius also relate many of the same facts; and they constitute part and parcel of Roman History.†

And there is no rebutting evidence. The story told by the soldiers that the disciples stole the body away while they slept, is incredible on the face of it; they did not believe it themselves. If true, it would involve them in ruin, for it was death to sleep

* Lightfoot's Works. 1670.

† Josephus' Jewish War, Book V. Sec. 8, &c. Tacitus' History, Book V. Sec. 13.

on guard. And how could they testify to what occurred while they were asleep? This story shows the inability of the Scribes and Pharisees to confute the testimony of the apostles. They have made no other denial of the facts.

When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, and in their most august council, charged home upon them the guilt of killing the Prince of Life, by wicked hands, whom God raised from the dead, and in whose name he and the other apostles wrought miracles, would they not have disproved his assertions, if in their power? But "They could say nothing against" what he had said and done. When they were cut to the heart, and took council to slay Peter, would they not have disproved his assertions if there had been any way to do it?

If they made any such attempt, why have not their writings come down to us—books written then and there on the spot? They could be as easily preserved as the writings of the Evangelists. They would not have as many enemies—not so much effort would be made to destroy them; and there have always been men ready to preserve and perpetuate them; but there is no evidence that any such book ever existed. While it can easily be shown that we have the record of the story told by the apostles; it has been quoted and copied so often; guarded by the providence of God from the malice of priests and kings; that it cannot be denied that we have essentially the words of the Holy Spirit, penned so long ago by holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

"Wrath and lightning" have guarded the sacred page, and if even every copy of the Bible were destroyed, it might all be collected again from the abundant quotations made from it in former times.

We remark, in closing, then—

1. It is vastly easier to believe in the resurrection of Christ than to disbelieve it. It is impossible not to receive the testimony we have, and account for the facts of the case in any other way.

It amounts, if not to a mathematical, yet, to a moral demonstration; unless we deny the possibility of proving such a fact, on any other, by human testimony, with the addition of Divine confirmation; and set aside all historical evidence.

2. We have here a most convincing proof of the Divinity of Christ. He has the keys of hell and of death. He laid down his life voluntarily, and took it up again. "He was declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." He claimed to be Divine: he was put to death on the charge of blasphemy, for falsely setting up such a claim; but he made it good by this act of raising himself from the dead. By the exertion of Divine Power, he proved that he was what he claimed to be, and God acknowledged

it. It was not possible that he should be holden by the cords of death, or the bars of the grave.

3. We see that he finished the work for which he came into the world, made an atonement for sin, introduced everlasting righteousness, and is every way qualified to be the Saviour of the world, for he ever liveth to make intercession.

God has accepted his work ; and now on the ground of it, invites all to come and seek the pardon of their sins.

He proclaims to all that feel their wants, to come, and they shall be supplied out of a full treasury in the hands of Christ, who hath done all things well, and is sealed by the Father and by authority offered to the world. All the prophecies, types, and shadows of the Old Testament met in Him.

4. We have in the resurrection of Christ a pledge of the resurrection of his people. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "He that believeth in me shall never die." "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He is the first fruits, they are the full harvest. He is the point of union and the principle of life. He was made a life-giving spirit. He has only to order, as in the case of Lazarus, and all the realms of the dead will become instinct with life.

5. But, finally, though it is true that if Christ be *not* risen, you may be still in your sins ; yet it does not follow of course when it is proved that he has risen, that you are not in your sins.

Without personal application to him, and faith in him as your Saviour, you cannot be saved. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification ; but we are justified by faith in his name, and faith is an operative assent to his word.

His precious blood must be sprinkled upon our consciences to purge them from dead works to serve the living God. We may have all remedies for disease at hand, but if not employed and applied, they will do no good. So with the provisions of the Gospel : they do not operate in a magical way, and at a distance ; Christ must be brought nigh to us, and we to him. He must be formed in us the hope of glory.

THE ELEVENTH HOUR WORKER.

Two great facts at once meet us in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. One is, that so far as making God's glory the grand end of our being, we are all by nature standing idle. The other is, that God, whose favor we have all forfeited by our sins, is pleased to call and receive the willing and obedient into his vineyard at all hours of the day of life. Wonderful as it is, that he should call us at all, the wonder of wonders is, that at life's

latest evening hour, he should bid us enter his vineyard. But this arrangement is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

God is pleased to call aged sinners into his kingdom, to show the sovereignty of his grace. As every man, young or old, has forfeited his favor, God would teach us that he is under obligation to none, and therefore has mercy on whom he will. So that while it is true that all who seek him early shall find him, it is not true that none who seek him late shall find him. We know that the young, with hearts tender and impressible, are the most hopeful subjects of renewing grace; that in old age the moral sensibilities become more indurated, evil habits more confirmed, and the chains of sin more strongly riveted upon us. But yet God is pleased to interpose by his all-conquering grace, and bring even aged sinners into his kingdom. Nicodemus, though old, could be born again. That so many of the aged do not come to Christ is owing to the fact—not that they are not called—but that they do not hear the voice of God. It is the merciful province of the Spirit to unstop their deaf ears, and so incline them to hear, that their souls shall live.

Again God calls aged sinners into his kingdom to teach us that none should despair of mercy. All who penitently and believingly beg for mercy shall find mercy. If we may not pray and hope because we are great sinners, then the mouths of all, young and old, must be stopped. Many of the young, so rapidly downward is their course, are more bold and hardened in sin, than some on whom rests the weight of three score years and ten. Let the aged then remember that God, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, delights in showing mercy to the "poor in spirit" in all periods and conditions of life; that one day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; that he looks not to the number of years at all, or to the number of sins, but to this man will he look "that is poor and of a contrite heart and that trembleth at his word."

"And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

Though they may have stood idle so far as seeking their salvation and God's glory is concerned till the Eleventh hour, yet the voice of the Master is: "Why stand ye all the day idle? Go ye also into my vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Life's one hour remains, and that is one of mercy and hope. Luke Short hears the Saviour's voice after an hundred years spent in sin. And if the aged may come, let none despair.

Again God may call aged sinners into his kingdom, that by the great good done by them the little remaining time, they may rebuke the inefficiency of those who have been many years in the Church. What multitudes go limping and halting through long years in the church, as with the unequal legs of the lame man!

Oh, how often do young professors, and those of longer standing in the church, need a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost to arouse them from spiritual slumber, that they may gird on anew their armor, and go forth with fresh zeal to the great battle of the Lord.

But whether or not these may be among the reasons why God calls aged sinners into his kingdom, the glorious fact is, that he does call us, poor sinners, by his word, providence and Spirit, at all periods of our mortal life, from early dawn till its last evening hour.

To the young of the third hour of life's day, the voice of the Master is: "Go ye into the vineyard now, lest life's sun, rising so brightly, go down ere noon in darkness forever."

To the middle aged of the sixth hour he calls: "Go ye into the vineyard. You are now in the meridian. Cast your eye back to the morning horizon whence you set out. See with what rapid flight the wheels of time have borne you on. From this high stand-point look down to the evening horizon where sets life's sun, and consider how speedily will that sun hasten to its going down."

To the aged of the ninth and eleventh hour of life's little day, a voice from above is still calling, "Go ye also into the vineyard. The sun still shines, but with a softened, mellowed light. Behold how low life's sun has descended. See the high mountains casting their lengthening shadows far across the valleys. Soon will night spread her dark pall over you. Haste ye to Christ ere the shadows of death enfold you. Go work while it is day. The night is near when no man can work. Believe and love, and work and pray, and great shall be your reward."—*Puritan Rec.*

DESIRE OF PRE-EMINENCE.

There can surely be no doubt as to the duty of every man to strive after high excellence—at whatever is intellectually and spiritually ennobling. Such excellence is not only worthy the earnest pursuit of all, but its possession comes of aspiring and of labor. But there is quite a difference between aiming at eminence and vaunting of it. The fact that any individual has occasion to flaunt the claim, begets suspicion as to the validity of all such assumption. Certainly this is no part of the religion of Him who taught his followers that they should obey a different law from "the lords of the Gentiles,"—a law that respected the least as the greatest, which counted the servant as ruler; and whose word, following in the same vein, teaches His disciples while being "kindly affectioned" in honor to prefer one another. Modern tendencies are quite as strong as

when such injunctions were given, to fan, among disciples of a common faith, the desire of pre-eminence. The Saviour enjoined on those bearing His name and wearing His likeness, that they refuse to be called RABBI. This lesson they seem to have faithfully kept. Peter and John and James, and others, are brethren having naught to distinguish them but a common ardor in one great service. Paul and Barnabas are laborers in common. The former, though counselling his loved sons in the Gospel, Timothy, Titus and Onesimus, does not arrogate for himself any superiority over them. Never does he forget, in his salutations, his most unknown or unhonored fellow-workers, not omitting the caution "Help those women who labored with me in the Gospel with Clement also," &c., repeating carefully his remembrance to the cherished household of Onesiphorous which had remembered him in his bonds. Peter knows him, learned as he was, and intellectually "the very chief of the apostles," while counting himself "nothing," as "our beloved brother, Paul."

We will not affirm that the primitive spirit which thus knit in a common "brotherhood" those holding to "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," has died out of modern Christianity. It still lives. But is it not beset with sore temptations? Does the disciple of Christ now, as much as when under the eye of that Divine Teacher, shrink from the awards and appellations which in name, at least, place him above his fellows? Is the rivalry for excellence—for holiness—the distinguishing rivalry of Christians, of ministers, of those invited to trusts of responsibility? Are churches, societies, Sabbath schools, conference circles, choirs, each and all, animated only to be like Christ—do the work of Christ and receive the reward which he bestows? The beloved John, who desired most of all to see his children "walking in the truth," and "fellow-helpers to the truth," was confronted by one of whom he says: "I wrote to the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." This love made him a man of "malicious words," and a disturber of the peace of Zion. Of him we have no other—no better record. His love of "pre-eminence" ruled him to the hurt of himself and of others.

This same spirit still lives clothed in new forms—nursed by new agencies, to oppose which is sometimes to set one's self against the very current itself. The feeling yet clamors for the ascendant that asks not, "How can I bring most honor to my Lord?" but "How can I be most honored of men?" Parity is disliked,— "pre-eminence" sought. Does not the state of our Zion too much declare it?—*Watchman and Reflector.*